

[Mrs. Mary Bickett]

S241-LI DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS Ogaila, Nebr. North Platte

DATE Oct. 25 , 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

1. Name and address of informant Mrs. Mary Bickett, W. 13th North Platte
2. Date and time of interview
3. Place of interview Her home
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. A comfortable quite new home on 3 lots at outskirts of N. W. part of town. C15 - Nebr.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS [?] North Platte

DATE Oct 25, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. Mary Bickett W. 13th St. North Platte

1. Ancestry Grandmother Scotch-Irish name of Smith also has German and English blood.

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2. Place and date of birth Belmont County Ohio near Belair, year 1852

3. Family

4. Place lived in, with dates Ohio 1852-1886

5. Education, with dates

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

7. Special skills and interests Her holostain [?] is her chief hobby. Is active and does own chores.

8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant Small has never been large, rather scant white hair, fine blue eyes, is old looking but active, does her share of caring for the new calf and chores and house. Has an active mind, is matter-of-fact, has been a fine type of pioneer woman character.

10. Other points gained in interview

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Ruby E. Wilson ADDRESS [?] North Platte

DATE Oct. 25, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. Bickett W 13th St. North Platte

We came here 52 years ago last March 28. We left Ohio to come to Logan County. That was in 1886. We came to a little Ireland inland town by the name of Gandi.

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Mr. Bickett had been a Civil war soldier and they were given 160 acres to homestead. We settled 10 mi. S.W. of Gandi. I was about 34 when I came here. Our oldest child was about 9. My husband got \$4.00 per month pension and in 1890 was raised to \$17.00 and we thot we were rich.

We lived in a shack till we could get a sod house made. We made a 3 room sod house and took the timber from the shack to make the roof on the house. We lived in the sod house till in 1906 then we built a frame house of 6 rooms. We set out a little orchard of cherries and apples, we were on a hillside and the well was above the orchard which sloped to the south so we watered the orchard that way.

The first school house there was built the same fall we came, had the first term of 2 months, and one day in the spring the young girl who was teaching heard the top crack and took the children out and dismissed them and in the morning there was no more school, it had all fell in. That was Pleasant Valley school then another was put upt up and we had church and Sunday School and different social gatherings besides school. We had lots of good times in the school but we never danced in it because it was used for a church.

We had picnics too in a grove of trees and spelling schools and literarys. The old bachelors that had settled around came and the home-steaders daughters and we'd have better times then than now.

In the early years,t he first 4 years after we came we had corn to feed to the hogs. We got about 2 1/2 ¢ per lb. for fat hogs. One time we had 4 that filled a wagon box and we sold them and got \$104.00 for them.

We had good corn those first 4 years then in 1890 we had a big drouth and it was a bad one.

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The coyotes seared the new-comers from the East, they scared us till we knew more about them.

We paid 2 and 3% interest, the banks just kept us broke. In the early years we hadn't much stock to loose but later we lost heavily. One [time?] we had 100 head of steers we had hired cared for until in the fall and we turned them into the corn field and lost them with corn stalk disease. We lost hogs badly with cholera too.

In the sping og spring of '87 before the green had come into the grass which was higher then than thatn now and thickly matted we had a bad prairie fire . and And in the spring of '93 too; we used to have prairie fires almost every spring and fall. That spring the children were in school and wanted to go that day, their father told them they couldn't go because he was afraid they'd be caught. A boy rode a horse as far as he could then tied him to a fence and went on to school and some body happened to think about that horse. He was terribly burned when they could get to him to cut him loose.

In '87 was the big fire, it burned from North Platte clear to the Dismal River. This was early spring after the snow had gone but before greening up. The blizzards and North wind in the winter had driven the cattle down and they were so awful poor. In the early spring that way they hadn't had any feed and had been on the range all winter. They were so wild they wouldn't let us get near, there were a lot of cattle in that part of the country. That was the old Bratt range I think. They came into our place for safety from the fire. There was a fire guard planed plowed around our place. Some of them had run until they couldn't run any more. They were scorched and with patches burned off.

The prairie stunk with so many rotting careasses carcasses , there were several on our homestead. They finally rounded up their cattle and took them away from our place.

My husband went away in the fall to work in the hay. He went to "the bottoms" (N. Platte) to get money for supplies and shoes.

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Those were trying times but sometimes I think its not much better now. But we had sickness then. My brother had been working in a dairy in N. Platte and got malaria in 1887 and came home for me to care for. He was delerious and I've often wondered how he lived. It was 3 months before he could walk. We had a blizzard that lasted about 2 months before we could realy get around. In 1888 or '89 was that bad blizzard when a teacher and children froze to death. We have I've been alone so much with sickness. We had one child, a daughter Mrs. Harry Morrow born in July after we came here in March then in about [6?] years we had 3 more close together. One fall my husband was down here working in the hay and a boy of ours 5 years old went into a convulsion and I didn't know what to do. I sat with him all night, he went out of one right into another and I never thot he'd live. I'd have had to of left the baby and him with the other children and go quite a ways to the neighbors to get some one to go after a doctor away over on Garfield Table, old Dr. Jones. That was a dark rainy night. The boy got better and never had any more spells.

One time Charlse charles the oldest boy was hurt, 1 shoulder broken and the other arm, Will, my husband had just started to the Platte with a load of hogs. Some body took us to North Platte and when Will came we had beat him there and he heard we were there. We took the boy to Mrs. Cochran a friend of the family and stayed a week. That was the place my daughter had stayed when she taught her first term of school.

We had wild plums and grapes we could get them off the Dismal. We got our wood from the Dismal. A bunch of the neighbors neighbor men would go together and get the wood out and [?] haul it, it was a long trip, they'd get out about as far to Beulah Johns and camp and get water and then to on the next day. They used to camp at Bedell's lot. Mr. Bedell was a great hunter and lots of times they'd get venision there.

One time I was alone while he was gone on one of those trips after wood and a storm came up and got awfully cold fast and I knew the light cow chips and trash wouldn't be

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enough to keep us warm. The corn crib was full so I lifted the one little boy into the corn crib to get ears of corn to burn.

I believe my husband would have lived longer if it hadn't been for those hard trips. Several winters we got wood that way. He had to lay out and storms and blizzards would come up. I think he took cold that way that finally settled in his kidneys. When he made trips to N. Platte he would start in nice weather and often get caught in a blizzard before he could reach N. Platte, it was a long trip and he often came home in a blizzard.

But I'd rather be on a farm even at my age than to try to live on three little old lots. There's the same work with 1 cow and the chores.